



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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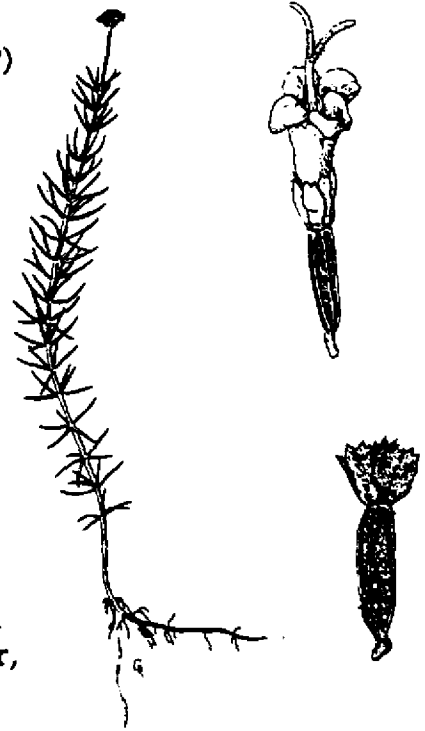
MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

SCLEROLEPIS

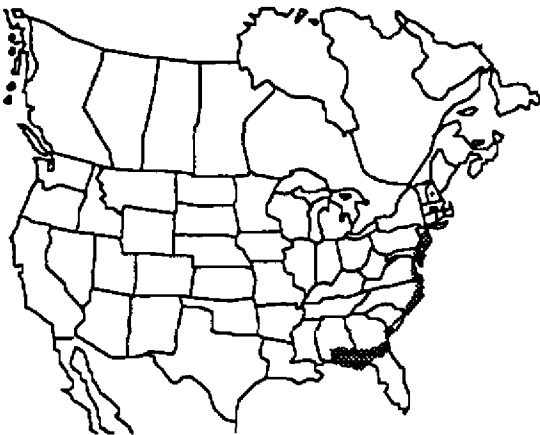
(*Sclerolepis uniflora* (Walt.) BSP)

Description

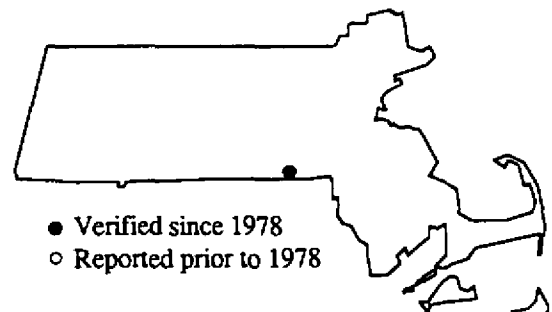
Sclerolepis is a delicate, creeping plant in the Aster family (Compositae or Asteraceae), which can form extensive mats on pond shores. The linear, stalkless, hairless leaves are 1-2 cm (2/5 - 4/5 in.) long and are arranged in whorls of four to six. The stems reach from 1 to 4 dm (1/4 to 1 1/2 ft.) in length and are usually unbranched. In autumn, *Sclerolepis* produces pinkish or flesh-colored flowers borne in a terminal head (dense cluster of small, stalkless flowers). This inflorescence is 4-15 mm (4/25 - 15/25 in.) wide. The fruit is a 1-1.3 mm (1/25 in.) long, dark brown to black achene (a dry, one-seeded fruit) with whitish ribs. *Sclerolepis* is a perennial that can spread vegetatively and that overwinters by way of its slender, whitish rhizomes (horizontal underground stems which may bear rootlets).



Godfrey, R.K. Aquatic and Wetlands
Plants of the Southeastern United
States: Dicotyledons. University of
Georgia Press. Athens.



Documented Range of *Sclerolepis*



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

Range

The documented range of *Sclerolepis* includes areas near the coast from Alabama and Florida to New Jersey. Disjunct populations occur in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Similar Species

Golden Hedge Hyssop (*Gratiola aurea*) is found in the same habitat as *Sclerolepis*. While Golden Hedge Hyssop looks similar when immature, it has only two opposite leaves per node and has wider, or lanceolate, leaves. In addition, mature plants of Golden Hedge Hyssop have showy, yellow, tube-shaped flowers.

Habitat in Massachusetts

Sclerolepis is found on sunny pond shores, amongst cobbles or where leaf litter collects, where there is a considerable drop in water level late in the summer. It appears to require protection from wave action; however, it can grow both on beaches and in shallow water. The one current station in Massachusetts is a pond shore habitat, including sandy, gravelly areas among boulders and wet, peaty areas. Associated species include the water milfoils *Proserpinaca intermedia* and *Proserpinaca pectinata*, Pipewort (*Eriocaulon septangulare*), Golden Hedge Hyssop (*Gratiola aurea*) and various species of rush (*Juncus* spp.) and mermaid-weed (*Myriophyllum* spp.).

Population Status

Sclerolepis is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts. There is only one station in the Commonwealth, which was first discovered in 1911 and has been verified since 1980. Reasons for the plant's rarity include the plant's limited dispersal capability and the fact that Massachusetts is disjunct from the major portion of the plant's range. Threats include shore development and foot traffic. *Sclerolepis* is also considered rare in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina.